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THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF ETCHING

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THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF ETCHING
BEING A LECTURE DELIVERED TO
THE PRINT COLLECTORS' CLUB BY
MARTIN HARDIE, R.E., ON JULY 8TH
1921, WITH A FOREWORD BY
SIR FRANK SHORT, R.A., P.R.E., R.I.

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Shopperton Seymour Hadley 1864

Seymour - Hadley

FOREWORD

*I*T was a great disappointment to me that illness prevented my being present when Mr. Martin Hardie gave the inaugural lecture to the Print Collectors' Club on the British School of Etching. With other members of the Club who, like myself, were unable to attend, I am glad that in response to many requests the lecture is being published in a not unworthy form. In the index to the late Sir Frederick Wedmore's "Etchings," Mr. Hardie is described as "bureaucrat and etcher." He is Keeper of the Department of Engraving, Illustration and Design in the Victoria and Albert Museum; and our Print Collectors' Club, like the Museum, is fortunate in having the help and guidance of one who combines administrative skill with sound historical knowledge, and, not less important, a practical command of the Etcher's craft.

Without these qualities it would have been impossible for Mr. Hardie to have taken a balanced view of the many aspects and interests included in his subject, even after eliminating, as was necessary in the time at his disposal, all but British work and all but the etching method. In reviewing a subject like this, if judgment is to be of any value, the broadest outlook must be taken: there must be no best and no worst—and, indeed, there never is—and it makes no difference whether an etching is done with a dozen or ten thousand lines so long as the message of the etcher is thereby conveyed. Leaving aside work that is mainly skilled craftsmanship—of which there must always be a certain amount—there will remain for the collector very many forms of the art in which he will find rest and joy, prints that appeal to him both by the subject or motive and by the mode of treatment. It is the understanding of the facilities and limitations of the various methods of

etching and engraving, and of their full qualities, that adds so much to the appreciation and pleasure that prints bring to the true collector. We hope by means of other lectures such as this, by social meetings, by technical demonstrations, and by all means in our power, to promote general knowledge of all forms of engraving, and to establish a common meeting ground for print-lovers and those who practise the various arts of making prints: and we hope, by earning the enthusiastic support of lovers of fine prints, to build up so strong a position, that some day the Club and its parent, the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers, may have a permanent home where all our aims may be pursued with ampler scope.

FRANK SHORT.

THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF ETCHING

WHISTLER, in his *GENTLE ART OF MAKING ENEMIES*, places several people under his ban, among them the so-called "experts"—"those sombre of mien, and wise with the wisdom of books, who frequent museums—collecting—comparing—compiling—classifying—contradicting." On every charge, from sombreness of mien to capacity for contradiction, I must plead guilty, and it is with the greater timidity that I venture to deliver this opening lecture of the Print Collectors' Club to so distinguished an audience of connoisseurs and well-known artists. When the honour was thrust upon me, it was suggested that this first lecture should be a survey of the whole history of etching. That would have meant a very superficial treatment of the subject, and so it seemed preferable to limit our attention to the British School. But even the British School of Etching is "no narrow frith to cross," and you must pardon me if the short time at our disposal allows only of cursory reference to many well-known etchers, with just an indication of the milestones and landmarks from which you can map out, or recall to your memory, the big outlines and features of our subject to-night. And to give you a final apology for an inadequate treatment of a large subject I would point out that it would take all our time to read you just a bibliography, with little more than titles, of all that has been written about British etching from Faithorne's "Art of Graving and Etching," published in 1662, down to the last illuminating article by Mr. Malcolm Salaman, who, you will be pleased to know, has recently been elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers in place of the late Sir Frederick Wedmore.

Nor can we enter into details of technique—that is a subject for later demonstrations and lectures. But, as I am addressing the amateur (in the true sense of the word) as well

as the technician, I would ask you to consider the fact that every one of the etchings which you see reproduced to-night was done in the same way—drawn with a point of steel or of a stone (such as diamond or ruby) on copper or zinc or other metal, printed direct without further treatment in the case of the scratched lines of dry point, or printed from lines bitten with acid into the metal plate. In any case, everything depends on a basis of pure line drawn with a fine point ; and to understand etchings you must appreciate the value, the quality, the characteristics of line. You will find that an etcher's line can be as personal, as expressive, as diverse, as handwriting. The line that the etcher makes on copper is his means of expression—his language ; and, in Hazlitt's words, "it is in the highest degree unphilosophical to call language or diction the dress of our thoughts. It is the *incarnation* of our thoughts." You can recognise the master from a square inch of his plate, by the subtle incarnation of personality that creeps into every line of his work. That is why I have put on the screen as a key-note to our whole subject a little plate of " Shepperton " by Sir Francis Seymour Haden. It is a very simple plate—more than half of it white space—yet it is masterly in composition and in expressive rendering of nature. The work throughout seems so loose and unconscious, yet every line is vital and reveals the master's hand.

To enter on the history of British etching we must begin with Hollar, because—born in 1607, just one year later than Rembrandt—he marks the beginning of etching in our country. Born at Prague, Hollar came to England with the Earl of Arundel in 1637, and except for eight years passed at Antwerp during the troubles of the Civil War, spent his life in our country. An indefatigable worker, he executed over 2,700 plates—historical subjects, portraits, architecture, costume, topography—an almost incredible record of industry. On the screen is his portrait of H. Van der Borch, and you will



Whelan fecit 1847



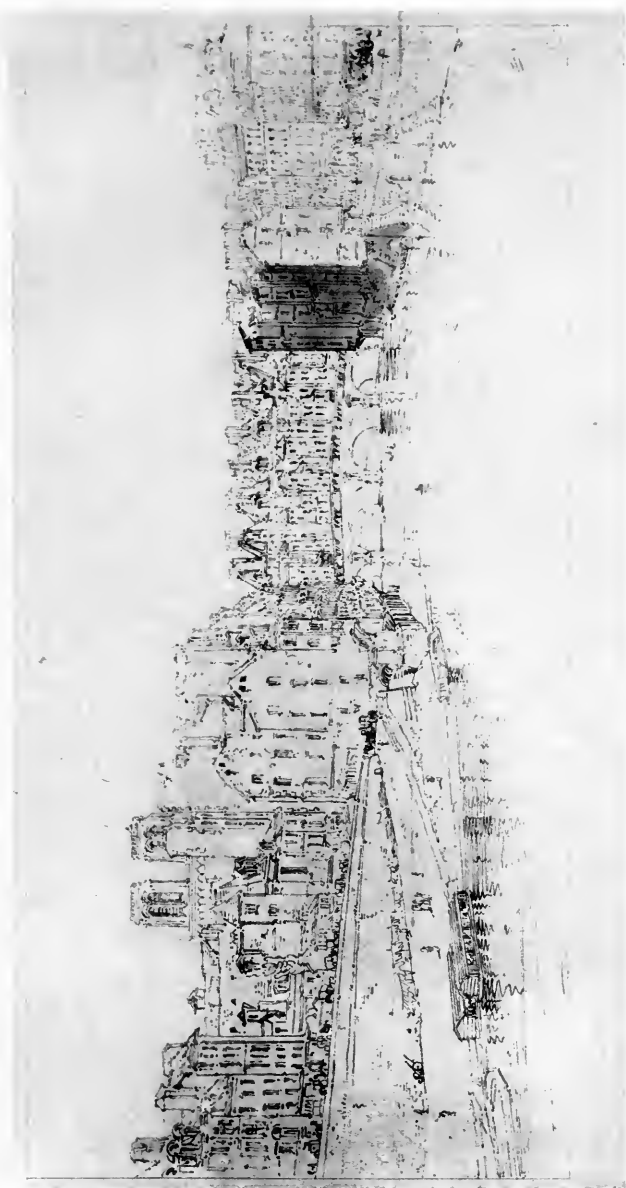
see at once that with Hollar we begin with a master of technique, using a line drawn and bitten with extraordinary precision and expressiveness. And all through the history of etching you can never disregard technique, and more and more you will weigh and balance it against artistic vision. You will find what the French describe as *métier* or *cuisine* as opposed to *âme* : craftsmanship *versus* soul. And the greatest etchers, from Rembrandt downwards, are those who have used their craft for the expression of something personal, interpretative, spiritual. The great etcher cannot, as Hollar must have done, sit down to make an etching after breakfast every morning. I recall, with some misgiving, the fact that the motto of our Society reads *Nulla dies sine linea*. Let us interpret it as expressing the hope that some member somewhere is scratching a line on copper. Heaven forbid that we should all be doing it every day ! One day's toil following another make the *mezzotint* an epic, but the fine etching must have something unpremeditated, must sing itself like a lyric. It must always be the offspring of a mood ; it must be impulsive, swift—inexplicable as love at first sight. If there be craftsmanship behind the impulse, there may result a masterpiece of the world. Now Hollar rarely rises above the level of the master craftsman. The hand is deft, the mechanics faultless, the application untiring, but he opens no magic windows, takes us into no comradeship of spiritual beauty, follows no dream. Yet such things as his views of London at the time of the Great Fire (on the screen you have his view of Old Richmond Palace), some of his costume plates, and the sets of muffs and shells, are little masterpieces of their kind, never destined to command fabulous prices in the sale-room, but things which the collector will always love and treasure for their refinement and perfection of craft. His muffs, about three inches square in the print, are perfect miracles of observation and of ingenuity in execution.

Hollar's numerous etchings must have been widely known in England, but it is difficult to trace any continuity of tradition. As has been said, the use of the etching needle in our country was sporadic, and without searching for connecting links, one may leap from Hollar to Hogarth (1697-1764).^{*} Vandyck (1599-1641) comes between, but I am passing Vandyck, because his series of portrait etchings was executed in Flanders before he settled in London.

Etching was used by Hogarth mainly, of course, as the foundation of his well-known sets of engravings, but he used etching for its own sake in some small subscription plates. His "Lord Lovat" of 1746, and his "Laughing Audience" of 1733, are done with the freedom and impulsiveness that the good etching demands.

But, surveying the eighteenth century as a whole, we find no great original masters of etching. Jonathan Richardson, the elder (1665-1745), a great collector whose mark appears on so many fine Old Master drawings, etched a few portraits. Thomas Worlidge (1700-1766) was more prolific, but his work possesses no striking value as original etching. His portrait of Walter Baker—the first state—which you see on the screen, shows his accomplishment at its highest, but his work is of chief interest to us mainly because he used dry-point freely, and because he carried on the Rembrandt tradition, making numerous copies from Rembrandt, which, in spite of their inadequacy, are sometimes a snare to the collector. The Rembrandt collector has often also found a pitfall in the conscientious work of Captain William Baillie (1723-1810), who made many close copies of the great master, and also with singular boldness restored the original plate of Rembrandt's Hundred Guilder print, which had come into his possession. His own work is unimportant, but his method may be seen in our slide from an etching of a self-portrait by Franz Hals.

^{*}These dates, not all inflicted on the audience, are inserted here at the President's suggestion.



It is not till the first decades of the nineteenth century that we find British etchings of real importance, reflecting spirituality and true personality of temperament. The rise of an indigenous school of landscape painting, and the blossoming of the British School of Water-Colour, carried with them a return to the high traditions of painter-etching. Girtin and Turner, Wilkie and Geddes, Crome and Cotman, make the first forty years of the nineteenth century a period of memorable revival.

Girtin (1775-1802) and Turner (1775-1851), it is true, both used etching merely as a preparatory groundwork for aquatint and mezzotint, but both used it with a mastery that gives permanent value to their work. It was in 1802, the last year of Girtin's short life of twenty-seven years, that he was working on the "Picturesque Views of Paris." The etching you see is a view of Belle-Vue and the Pont de Sève from the Terrace at St. Cloud. There is time only to remind you that he made the etchings for these views in soft-ground, worked over the proofs of the etchings with a wash of sepia, and then sent them to be completed in aquatint by Lewis and others. The etched states—there are some unique trial proofs in the Victoria and Albert Museum—are, in most cases, finer, at any rate, more personal, more autographic, than the aquatints, and stand alone in the history of etching. I think you will agree with this if you look first at the etching of the "View of the City from the Louvre," and then at our slide made from the finished print in aquatint. From Rembrandt to Cameron, no one has surpassed Girtin in the use of nervous, expressive line to render the superb sweep of panoramic views.

As I am speaking to collectors, it may be of interest to say that my own chief find, certainly my most wonderful bargain, was a set of a dozen or more touched proofs of Girtin's etched states. They were undescribed, many of them folded up and creased, in a large parcel of newspaper cuttings and so on

at Hodgson's saleroom. When I saw them, they had been turned over by dozens of dealers and sold the day before. I traced them to a dealer in Yorkshire, and he gave me the entire set for 15s., making a profit on his whole parcel. Most of them are the proofs now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and I have three or four myself.

Turner's etchings, such as the "Via Mala" of our slide, were done almost exclusively for the series of prints known as the *Liber Studiorum*, dating from 1807 onwards. For this great set of landscape compositions he made drawings in sepia; then, in nearly every case, he etched with his own hand the main outlines of his subject, making a framework, so to speak, on which he himself or some mezzotint engraver under his own supervision, was to complete the work. The etched states, like Girtin's, were intended as the scaffolding for the later print, and on that account are generally strongly bitten. The etching on the screen is "The Junction of the Severn and the Wye," and it may interest you if we follow it by the finished mezzotint. Turner knew everything or something about every branch of painting and engraving, but he had not probed very deep into the mysteries of etching. He had not realised, like Palmer, that it was a "temper-trying, teasing, yet fascinating art." His etchings, none the less, will always take their place as pure etching for their brilliant draughtsmanship, their wonderful economy of means. There is not a touch that is not fluent and finely expressive.

And here, perhaps, I may mention Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), because his etched work, too—contemporary with Turner's, though very different—was also made as a skeleton, to be clothed with aquatint and colour. That it was made for issue on the "1d. plain and 2d. coloured" principle, makes it the more remarkable. Wrought without the higher qualities of etching, and with a somewhat even biting, Rowlandson's work, in etching as in drawing, has a



vitality and force and vividness that give him a notable place in British art.

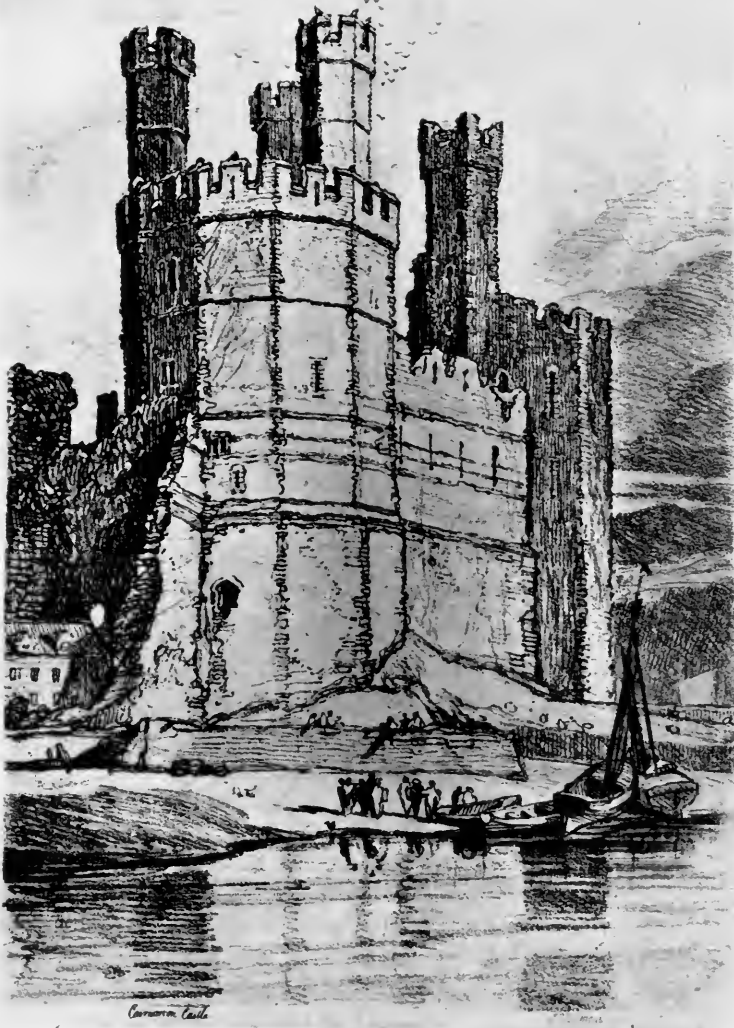
In the case of Wilkie (1785-1841) and Geddes (1783-1844), however, etching was an end in itself. Sir David Wilkie, who used dry-point freely as well as acid, produced some thirteen plates between 1819 and 1824—all of them lively studies of character, such as "Reading the Will" and "The Lost Receipt," both of which are little pieces of *genre*, admirable not only for fine technique, but for the simple veracity with which, so ingeniously, they tell their tale. Andrew Geddes, whose fifty plates were produced between 1812 and 1826, takes a far higher place as an interpreter, whether of landscape or human character. His portrait of his mother is a masterly dry-point, recalling Rembrandt in its shrewd characterisation, its close workmanship and rich use of burr. His landscapes, such as "Peckham Rye," boldly and freely handled—again with an echo of Rembrandt—are charming impressions direct from nature. I may add that there are very fine collections of Geddes' work (with a large number of trial proofs) both at the British Museum and at the Victoria and Albert Museum. His work was fully catalogued by Mr. Campbell Dodgson, whom we are proud to have as an Honorary Fellow of our Society and member of this Club, in the 1915-17 volume of the Walpole Society. I would remind you that the late Sir Frederick Wedmore, also an Honorary Fellow of our Society, a keen student and a brilliant writer, spoke wisely of Geddes' landscape etchings as "to be eagerly sought for, since they are really the successors of Rembrandt and the faultless precursors of Muirhead Bone."

To show again how sporadic was etching in our country, we must now travel from Edinburgh to Norwich. We celebrate this year the centenary of the death of John Crome (1768-1821), "the little dark man with the brown coat and the top-boots," whose works Borrow prophesied in

“Lavengro,” seventy years ago, would some day rank “among the proudest pictures of England—and England against the world.” To-night we must remember that Crome and his followers not merely planted firmly on our soil an indigenous school of landscape painting, but began the modern revival of etching, following old and sound tradition, but adding something of our national spirit and outlook. In their hands English etching became a living, breathing art, and we may claim Crome as the first of English “painter-etchers.” His etchings were for Crome the idle amusement of an empty day, bits of personal observation on Mousehold Heath or in East Anglian lanes or woods. One likes to think that Crome’s work inspired Jasper Petulengro’s gospel of joyous life: “There’s night and day, brother, both sweet things ; sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things ; there’s likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother.”

Crome’s etchings were done, as he says, “for pleasure or remembrance”—and that is how all really great etchings have been made. Some ill-bitten, careless proofs were given to his friends, but they were never really known or published till after his death. The British Museum, I may say, has a representation of Crome that is complete and unique, and it is important—there, or elsewhere—to study the early states, because in later editions the plates were botched and bungled by successive hands, by Crome’s son, Ninham, W. C. Edwards and others. The collector must avoid those later issues of 1838 and subsequently, that came out in a portfolio with Dawson Turner’s memoir of the artist.

Cotman (1782-1842), the next great artist of the Norwich School, was probably influenced by Crome, but it was not till 1838, seventeen years after Crome’s death, that his set of etchings, mainly in soft-ground, was published with the title of “*Liber Studiorum*.” There are many things in that volume, like the “Caernarvon Castle,” now before you, and



Carver's Castle

"Harlech Castle," that are little masterpieces of composition and design, wonderful in their searching draughtsmanship and in their cunning suggestion of texture and surface. There is brilliant draughtsmanship in Cotman's hard-ground etchings in his various publications on the antiquities of Norfolk and elsewhere—the "North West Tower, Yarmouth" is a fine example—but as a whole they lack the superb quality, the wonderful combination of breadth and intricacy that, as shown in his "Liber Studiorum," makes him one of the masters of English etching as well as of water-colour. The "Postwick Grove" is another delightful soft-ground etching, and I would remind you that the "Liber Studiorum," in which these etchings appear, was issued in volume form in 1838. Not so many years ago the volume, with its forty or fifty plates, could be bought for £4 or £5. It is rarer now, no longer an "unconsidered trifle" in the lists of secondhand booksellers, but the wise collector will not let the volume pass.

High also in rank among the etchers of the Norwich School we must place an amateur, the Rev. Edward Thomas Daniell (1804-1842), who worked under Crome as a boy at the Norwich Grammar School. His prints, covering the years 1824-1835, are full of interest and technical value, and at the same time curiously modern in their spirit. He reaches a very high level of refined thought and execution in his "Borough Bridge."

One would like to dwell, if time permitted, on other Norwich men, such as Stannard, Vincent, Ninham, and Stark. Stannard, in particular, who was only thirty-three when he died in 1830, I regard as a little master who has been too much hidden under the shadow of his Norwich contemporaries. In spite of dry unsympathetic printing, things like his "Witlingham Old Church" and his "Fisherman's Cottage," claim the highest respect for their command of the etched line. Joseph Stannard (1797-1830), appears to deserve greater admiration, greater permanence than he has hitherto won.

Contemporary with the Norwich School was David Charles Read (1790-1851), a drawing-master working at Salisbury, where, between 1826 and 1844, he produced some 240 plates, almost entirely of landscape. His work is often a little lacking in thought and coherence, but it is at times vigorous and spirited, rising perhaps to its highest level in some dry-points. Occasionally, as shown in our two slides, he is simple and unaffected, in many ways anticipating the outlook of Legros or Seymour Haden.

We have now reached, with the last of the Norwich School, and with Read of Salisbury, the period of the 'forties in last century. We have seen Crome and Cotman, Wilkie and Geddes, Girtin and Turner, asserting themselves as isolated possessors of the true etching impulse ; but they stand alone, having no real following, and it was left to posterity to recognise the true value and importance of their art. They worked in isolation, with appreciation from the smallest of circles. They had no publishers, no exhibitions, no Press to praise or revile them ; and the collector of their days, instead of wisely choosing out the men of to-morrow, was filling his solander boxes with Marc Antonios and doubtful Old Master drawings. So they stood alone, and, till you reach the modern revival of etching in this country, beginning with Whistler and Seymour Haden, there is no main stream of etching, no close-knit sequence of events. It was not till the middle of last century that the new movement really began, and we must recognise that it received its first notable impulse from the etchers of France. In France the period from 1840 to 1865 covers the finest work of Jacque, Millet, Corot, Daubigny, Méryon, Bracquemond, Jacquemart—a wonderful period in etching, as in painting. On our side of the Channel the revival came later. Here, during the 'fifties, the art of etching was neglected or misunderstood. A few artists and amateurs practised etching, and formed an Etching Club in London,



which issued various publications beginning with a set of illustrations to Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," in 1861. Their work is well-drawn, sincere, too pretty, and shows little appreciation of the real spirit of etching. Millais, Creswick, Hook and Charles Keene stood out as doing work that was above the dull and uninspired productions of the rest, but one cannot forget that most of them had never seen a printing-press, and simply drew on the plate, leaving it to the club secretary to do the biting and all the rest. (Secretaries nowadays do not possess this gentle and accommodating nature! It would be rather fun, all the same, to have the chance of receiving a Short and biting it into a Brangwyn!) In the case of the Etching Club, however, one must make a qualification as to Samuel Palmer (1805-1881), for no one can fail to appreciate the strong individuality of this artist, and the romantic idealism of his work. In these days we are inclined to insist—perhaps overmuch—on precision, economy and expressiveness of line as the chief end of a good etching. Palmer was concerned with tone almost more than with line, but his work, with its multitude of lines, is always pure and legitimate. In plates such as "The Early Ploughman" or "The Herdsman," his glowing and flashing lights, his shadows, transparent and full of colour, his half-tones of charming gradation—are all attained by most delicate manipulation of line, "lingering and hesitating with the thought, lost and found in a bewilderment of intricate beauty." One does not speak of Samuel Palmer as being in the same rank with Rembrandt and Whistler, but one must respect his large ideals, his earnestness in execution. No one has rendered more impressively than he the sentiment of spiritual and ideal beauty immanent in landscape. And here, again, a word of advice to the collector. Samuel Palmer produced only thirteen plates. He is the one man whose complete *œuvre*, with time and trouble, and still at a moderate cost, you can

gather into your portfolio. There is great joy, as I know, in discarding one of your thirteen on finding a trump of a brilliant impression, and in adding here and there, as opportunity offers, a pet proof with a marginal note by the artist, or one of those trial states which show his mental and technical process so well.

To return to the Etching Club, to which Samuel Palmer gave honour from the start, we may recall that its publication of 1865 included a plate by Seymour Haden, and that in 1862 "Passages from Modern English Poets illustrated by the Junior Etching Club" contained two plates by Whistler. Poor Whistlers, but Whistler all the same. And looking further back, we note that Whistler (1834-1903) went to Paris in 1857, publishing his "French Set" in 1858; and that in 1859 Haden etched his "Thames Fisherman," and Whistler exhibited at the Royal Academy the first prints of the "Thames Set." In 1859, therefore, the art of true etching crossed the Channel, and set firm foot on English soil, and Whistler—American-born, but surely to be reckoned, with fairness, in the British School of Etching—rose as the greatest master, the greatest personality, in the history of modern etching. Are we to go further? For there are some who set him beside Rembrandt, perhaps above Rembrandt, as the greatest master of all time. Personally, I prefer to regard them as the Jupiter and Venus, largest and brightest among the planets in the etcher's heaven—Rembrandt the Jupiter, because he is the more forceful and masculine, with a brain powerful and masterful, penetrating in its perception of character, wide and deep in its emotions; Whistler the Venus, because, with all his mastery of medium, his significance of expression, he has, in marked degree, the predominant feminine qualities of intuition, quick insight, delicacy, refinement, daintiness—shall we say, too, of charming unexpectedness and caprice? It is those qualities that set his work apart. Tracing Whistler's development from his "French Set" of 1859, through his



"Thames Set," completed and published in 1871, his "Venice Set" of 1880, and the "Twenty-Six Etchings" of 1886, and the later "Dutch Set," not to speak of the endless intervening portraits and studies, we find masterpiece after masterpiece—there is no other word—each of them one of the ultimate things of art; and it is obvious that to-night we can only look at two or three, among them his "Wine Glass"—a miracle of accomplishment, a *tour de force*, like Hollar's Muff—and his "York Street, Westminster," one of those street subjects that he sketched so lightly and inimitably on the copper. And there are two slides to illustrate his portraiture—his "Becquet," and his "Annie Haden." And in all of them you will note his sensitiveness of line, his brilliant economy of means, his "audacious silence" in cunning use of blank space, his concentration on what he called "the eye of the picture," his unerring instinct for decoration, whether in line or in mass. His etchings stand as a perpetual witness to the value of pruning and condensing, a perpetual protest against all that crowds and confuses and weakens an artist's purpose. He is at his finest in our last slide of the "Traghetto."

The study of Whistler would require an entire lecture, but you must understand that—in the case of Whistler as of other etchers—I am trying to hold general interest rather than to satisfy or inform the special student. There is one thing, however, that interests etchers among us especially, and that is Whistler's art of printing. If ever anyone had the "palm of a duchess," which Haden thought so necessary in printing, it was Whistler; and no one has ever been so careful in his choice of old and mellowed paper; so skilful, almost inspired, in his manipulation of ink. It is noteworthy that whereas Rembrandt in his last period arrived through a combination of etching and dry-point to the use of pure dry-point and full printing, with Whistler the order is almost reversed. His Thames etchings were printed so that his line, and his line alone, made

their value. In his middle period, particularly in some of his Venice plates, he obtained effects depending very largely on surface tone, on the cunning distribution of ink, almost, as it were, painted on the plate. But more and more towards the end of his career, he returned to purity of line and the cleanest of printing.

Seymour Haden (1818-1910) was senior to Whistler by sixteen years, and had actually begun his career as an etcher during his journeys to Italy in 1843-4, when he made six small plates of which unique impressions are in the New York Museum. But his real and active work did not begin till he came under the inspiration of Whistler—then his brother-in-law—in 1859. He was, therefore, over forty when he really took to etching, and in 1859 he produced fourteen plates, showing full maturity—among them “On the Test,” “A Water Meadow” and “Out of the Study Window,” with its wonderful sky (good skies are very few in etching). In 1865 M. Philippe Burty recognised his power and published in Paris a volume, entitled “*Etudes à l'Eau-Forte*,” containing twenty-five etchings, among them those brilliant little sketches, so powerful in their rapid decision and intuitive grasp of essentials, the “Shepperton” and “Kilgaren Castle,” and another plate with a splendid sky, “Sunset on the Thames.”

We have to remember that Haden was a professional surgeon, and at the period of some of his finest work, etching was merely an occasional relaxation in the midst of a busy and successful career. Just as for many here, the study and collecting of prints means a happy withdrawal from the insistent clamour of daily life, so for Haden his work was a withdrawal from the common day. To adapt some words of Pater, he “carried a white bird in his bosom across a crowded public place”—and the true collector knows the same secret joy. Gray had a similar idea when he wrote of the stir of the great Babel, and his “loopholes of retreat.”



I hope that for many of us the Print Collectors' Club will serve as a loophole of retreat. I cannot help thinking of two collectors whom I know. One of them hides his Camerons and Bones in his office desk. The other, when he has bought something, in Balzac's phrase, "*à un prix qu'on n'avoue pas à sa ménagère*," invites a guest to Sunday lunch, and not till then, when Madame must perforce withhold her views, produces his new treasure. Yet even they carry a white bird in their bosom, and "walk with inward glory crowned." But the true moral is that the collector must now make his wife a member of the Print Collectors' Club.

But to return to Haden. "Do not forget," he wrote to M. Philippe Burty, the first critic to discern and publicly commend his merit, "that this short and delightful artist life is only a very slight episode, a *jour de fête*, so to speak, in a career long and laborious." The very fact that his artistic and professional lives were so interwoven explains, in a measure, the secret of his success. "To feel vividly," he wrote, "to be possessed for a few hours by some overmastering thought and record the thing before the fire has time to die out of it, that is the first condition of etching." He etched with great rapidity. Two or three copper plates were always with him, even when he drove round in his hansom on professional visits. You will recall the story of the Bishop's almost indignant amazement when, during an interval in the crisis of his wife's illness, he found the well-known surgeon calmly making an etching in the grounds of Fulham Palace. Haden used his plates like the pages of a sketch-book, putting down his immediate impressions of nature. Two plates were frequently etched in the course of an afternoon, as, for example, "Egham" and "Egham Lock," and "On the Test," and "The Water-Meadow"—four of his finest plates; and one happy day saw the production of his three superb dry-points of "Windmill Hill." His etchings were often deliberately

arrested at the stage of a sketch, but whether complete or incomplete, they are all palpitating with life, full of nervous vigour and freshness of impulse—the essence of the material selected with unfailing ease, and set down with lines that are keen and vital.

His large plate of “The Shere Mill Pond” is the most famous and the most valued, if auction prices count for everything. Hamerton made its fame by saying that “with the exception of one plate of Claude, this is the finest etching of a landscape subject that has ever been executed in the world.” In spite of Hamerton’s “brave words,” I think it has been greatly over-rated. Neither the “Shere Mill Pond” nor his other large plate of the “Breaking up of the Agamemnon,” can compare for a moment, in my opinion, with some smaller subjects which you have seen on the screen to-night, or with the glowing “Sunset in Ireland,” so perfect in its earlier states.

We owe pious homage to Seymour Haden because, in 1880, he became the founder and first President of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers; and if he is the parent of our Society, he is the grandparent of this Print Collectors’ Club. We owe him honour, because by his own powers as an etcher, his skill and learning as a writer and a collector, his prowess as the champion of a cause, he did more than anyone—far more than Whistler—to establish the present movement, and to promote the modern appreciation of fine prints.

On the walls to-night you will see just a few diploma works of members of the Society which Haden founded, works which till this evening very few members of the Society have ever seen—I have never seen them myself—so carefully are they locked away by our Curator, Mr. Robert Spence. You will note among them fine work—though sometimes immature work—by great etchers, living and dead. With one exception, I propose not to touch on the work of any living member of our Society. You know their work, and it would be invidious



for me to make a selection, but I want just to refer briefly to two or three deceased members of the Society, whose prints will always find their place in the collector's portfolios. The Society of Painter-Etchers was the first Society to welcome Legros in early days, just as it welcomed etchers so diverse as Walter Sickert, Joseph Pennell, Charles Shannon, and Rodin. First of all, then, among our deceased members, let us take Legros (1837-1911), who was associated with the Society from its start in 1880, and let me remind you that he was a naturalised Englishman, and taught for a time both at the Slade School and at South Kensington. Legros' message, if he had a message for his generation, was to urge retreat from the confusion and infidelity of modern life and art to the serene atmosphere of the past. But his work, with all its underlying scholarship, was strongly individual. His serene classical spirit was tinged always by his own mood and temperament. He was always a student, but he saw for himself; and those two qualities perhaps explain his power and influence. His work as an etcher falls into three periods or classes of subject. To his earlier days belong the themes that deal with the harshness of peasant life, with the grey monotony of "fugitive and cloistered virtue" within monastery walls. Such things as "La Mort et le Bucheron," "La Mort du Vagabond," and "Les Chantres Espagnoles," in spite of their noble and exalted imagination, give a constant feeling of "sorrow and leaden-eyed despair," and are, perhaps, too sad, meditative and wistful ever to make a popular appeal. To his second period, which began with his arrival in England, belongs a masterly series of portraits—of Watts, Poynter, Rodin and others. His landscape work, sometimes arbitrary and harsh in line—singularly lacking in knowledge and resource of craftsmanship—has yet a big sense of spaciousness and atmosphere, with a constant feeling of grandeur and emotional significance. Can we say that Haden ever touched

the feeling of poetry, the lofty pensiveness and solemnity that characterises such work as "*La Village Abandonnée*," or "*Le Mur du Presbytère*"?

To the school of Legros, strongly influenced by his example, belong Sir Charles Holroyd (1861-1917) and William Strang (1859-1921), the former a member of our Society from 1886 till his death—the latter from 1880 till his resignation in 1900. Holroyd was an artist with certain diplomatic and ambassadorial qualities which made him drift into official life as Director of the National Gallery. His etchings are the work of a man who, like his master, Legros, was just a little impatient of refinements of technique, but they are always scholarly in thought and design, steeped and mellowed, like his Monte Oliveto series and his "*Nymphs of the Sea*," in the Renaissance art which he knew and loved so well. His "*Yew Tree, Glaramara*," is typical of a certain strength and grimness characteristic of his outlook upon nature.

Strang, not hampered like Holroyd by being a bureaucrat as well as an etcher, was a prolific worker, and in much of his art also the Legros influence is clearly predominant. His plates, about 600 in number, are full of resourceful qualities and grim strength. His landscapes are dignified, often suggestive of colour, admirable in their directness and austere economy of line. His "*Ruined Castle*" has special interest, because Strang himself told me that it was a composition in the fullest sense. The quarry was at Dumbarton, Scotland, the castle at Orvieto, the figure drawn at Antwerp, the centre trees in Scotland, and the right-hand trees imaginary. The future, perhaps, will select as Strang's highest achievement his portraits, such as those of Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Emery Walker, and Frederick Goulding—the last two described by Mr. A. M. Hind as "standing without qualification among the noblest classics in the whole art of etching." Goulding—there may be some here who do not remember him—



was Master Printer to our Society and a great "character" (in the Scottish sense). As printer of etchings he reigned supreme in London from 1881 till his death in 1909. Whistler, Haden, Legros, our President, every great etcher of the time, acknowledged their indebtedness to Goulding—"the best printer of etchings in England," as Haden described him.

Some other deceased members may be mentioned. Sir Alfred East, a member of our Society from 1883 till his death, decorative always in etching as in painting, is somewhat akin to Brangwyn in his deeply bitten line.

Sir Charles Robinson (1824-1913), friend and pupil of Seymour Haden, sometimes gained almost brilliant atmospheric effects by a forceful employment of scraper and burnisher, and by the full use of happy accident.

Sir Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914), a member from 1880, was in many ways a great force in British art, a stirring enthusiast and experimenter—not always a great etcher, though there is both charm and power in "Gwenddyd," made by him as a specimen of dry-point. If I were including reproductive etching in our lecture to-night, a large space would be given to R. W. Macbeth (1848-1910), brother of our member, Mr. Macbeth-Raeburn. If he had not devoted his time and talent to the interpretation of pictures by other artists, he would have done fine original work. Elizabeth Armstrong, afterwards Mrs. Stanhope Forbes, who died in 1912, was another early member, exhibiting first in 1883, but in her case etching was soon abandoned for painting. Had her etched work such as "Good Morning" been produced in the last dozen years, I think she would have met with far wider appreciation than the limited number of her prints in existence can ever ensure. Edward Synge (1860-1913) I would mention for one or two graceful prints, and we may honour Luke Taylor (1876-1916) and Alick Horsnell (1882-1916), not only for their work, but because they laid down their lives in the Great War.

As I have said, it would be invidious for me to select, to summarise, or to criticise the work of living members of our Society, but in dealing with the history of British etching, we must be catholic enough to recognise that there are great etchers who—not through our fault—stand apart from our Society. Cameron and Brangwyn were members in the past, and the Society played a definite part in their early credit and career. There are others—Muirhead Bone and McBey, for instance—who have preferred to plough their lonely furrow. All of them hold a high place in modern etching, and so I propose to pass them in rapid review, showing one or two examples of their art. Cameron, whose first exhibits at the Society of Painter-Etchers were in 1889, is a keen observer of actual facts, but alive always to the claims of imagination and romance. We have no time for close study of his work to-night, but its main advance is from an early severity of realism to something more suggestive of colour and glamour, gained by an increasing use of the velvet burr of dry-point. The “Chimera of Amiens,” with its sombre and grave deliberation of style, is a type of many plates in which the artist expresses the whole genius of a building or a place. In his landscape—we may take “Kincardine” as a type—you find a similar use of finely selected line combined with rich masses, romantic in suggestion and expressive of colour. Of recent years he has produced little work in etching. Brangwyn, a member of the Society from 1904 till his resignation last year, is at the opposite pole to Whistler, whose dictum states that “the large plate is an offence.” Brangwyn is unorthodox; he would shatter our beliefs in the delicacy of the etched line, in purity of printing. But he is an artist of such power and originality that he must remain a law to himself, and at times almost persuades us to accept his creed. In the presence of his great results we cannot but admire his individuality of character, his strong personal convictions and his unfailing bigness of design. His “Road in





Picardy " is one of his earlier and smaller works, and shows him, I think, at his best, both in etching and design.

Muirhead Bone ranks supreme in his use of dry-point, whether in his studies of scaffolding, of chain and crane and timber, wrought out with the most searching observation; or in his landscapes, light and graceful, brilliant in their selection of what counts for most in line and rhythm, marked all of them by superb virtuosity in the use of the point. In his "Walberswick Ferry" you see his superb treatment of landscape and figures, an exact rendering of the spot, but a poem in execution. His "Ayr Prison," so classic in design, so modern in treatment, is one of the great masterpieces of all time. Its light spacious distance, in subtle contrast with the little group of moving figures and the shadowed grimness of the prison walls, is a stroke of real genius. I may say that this slide and the following slide, showing "A Girl's Head," by Augustus John, have kindly been lent by Mr. Harold Wright, who is so good a judge and so keen a collector that he ought to be on our roll of membership. Mr. Wright's second slide is the "Girl's Head," by Augustus John. Whatever be our personal feeling about Mr. John's etchings as a whole, he has undoubtedly followed the highest of traditions in his rendering of the figure, and no one can deny that in some of his portraits he has combined tradition with something of his own vivid personality and his own mastery of drawing.

James McBey has been strongly influenced, now by Rembrandt, now by Whistler, now by Forain, but you can lay your hand on no print that is imitative. Each one has a touch of vivid personality. He is obedient, but not subservient, to older traditions of his craft, carrying on the torch, but running in his own urgent way. And if I were asked to sum up, in a sentence, the chief characteristic and value of his work, I would say that, at any rate in all his recent work, he has brought into etching—whether of landscape or figure

subject—a new sense of animation and movement. His work is dynamic instead of static. In “El Soko” we cannot but appreciate, not merely the rhythm of design and the suggestion of sunlight, but the wonderful skill which shows the movement to and fro of crowds of white-robed figures—a brilliant thing to accomplish, not with colour, but with line. And in “Dawn”—one of the series showing the work of a camel patrol in Egypt—you have movement again, movement not only of figures but of light—the realisation of infinite spaces and the shimmer of heat where “boundless and bare, the lone and level sands stretch far away.”

Most, or all, of the etchers whom I have just mentioned, stand, I venture to think, above and apart from modern phases and fashions. At any rate, they uphold the high traditions of the past at a time when even our art is permeated by the modern spirit of unrest and materialism and infidelity. I would mention others, but one's judgment tends to be marked by personal inclination ; and contemporary judgment, in any case, is apt to be short-sighted. But though, for these reasons and others, I have said nothing of my fellow members of the Society of Painter-Etchers, I feel that you would blame me if here to-night, in a lecture on the British School of Etching, after speaking of our Founder and past President, I were to say nothing about his successor, Sir Frank Short.

It is over thirty years ago since Short produced his “Low Tide, the Evening Star, and Rye's Long Pier Deserted,” that gives so well the spirit and significance of the scene, the feeling of the solemn hush of eventide, of those peaceful moments that come “between the gloaming and the mirk.” During those thirty years his hand has acquired new cunning, his outlook has become wider, his command of methods more complete. In the kind of etching which he has chosen as his province, depending on brilliant economy of means, on infinite delicacy and subtle play of line, above all, on masterly



knowledge of technique—in that kind of etching alone (for we are not dealing to-night with the masters of mezzotint) he will take his place high in the ranks of the British School. And for many of us here, who owe so much to his actual teaching and example, he is, to use Barrie's phrase about Stevenson, "the great king of us all." His work in etching has a refined delicacy, a poetry of perception, a simple significance of line. In Whistler's phrase, he seizes on the eye of the picture, emphasising some delicious piece of detail, subordinating all else to the importance of his main theme. You will note this particularly in the early Bosham and Mersey series ("Sleeping till the Flood" will stand out always as a memorable achievement) where the eye is led usually to a long, low horizon, with details worked out with most subtle refinement.

There are those, I know, who underrate Short's work, or who fail to appreciate its full merit. They are misled partly by saleroom prices, which too often indicate a passing artificial fashion rather than true value, partly by lack of perspective. In years to come when our nineteenth century revival of etching is regarded by the historian, it will be recorded, I think, that when Short produced such prints as "Sleeping till the Flood," when he chose wide spaces of low-lying landscape with far-reaching meadows or shelving shore, when he saw the beauty of sands and harbours whence the tide has ebbed, he struck a new and original note in treatment and in subject. His treatment and his subjects two generations have been imitating ever since. I shall never forget how, more than a dozen years ago, one of the greatest of living critics assumed, without looking at his catalogue, that one of my own etchings was by Short, and praised it accordingly under the Master's name. For me this meant a curious mixture of pride and humiliation. Well, in time, Short's place as a leader, as an inspiring influence and as an originator,

will be even more sure than it is to-day, and to-day, at any rate, both the Society of Painter-Etchers and the Print Collectors' Club may be proud of their President.

On that note I might well stop, but I want the preacher's privilege of one word more. If anyone here has studied, not merely etchings, but Aristotle's Ethics, he will remember how Aristotle deals with certain actions demanding forgiveness because, though bad in themselves, they were committed involuntarily and in ignorance. He instances the man who let off the catapult (something bigger than the toy of our childhood) merely meaning to show how it worked. Now this lecture, bad in itself, demands your forgiveness because it was done involuntarily and with ignorance. I have but tried to show you how the catapult worked. Aristotle leaves us speculating as to what havoc was wrought by *his* man with a catapult. But *you* can tell me where I have missed, what damage has been caused, and—fortified by refreshment—you can turn the catapult against myself.

The Lecture was followed by a most interesting discussion. Among the speakers were Col. J. F. Badeley, C.B.E., R.E., who was in the chair, Sir Francis Newbolt, K.C., A.R.E., and Messrs. C. Lewis Hind, Charles Marriott, Henry Bell and Harold Wright.

THE LECTURE WAS ILLUSTRATED BY LANTERN
SLIDES FROM THE FOLLOWING ETCHINGS :—

HOLLAR, W.	Portrait of H. Van der Borcht, Jun. View of the Old Richmond Palace. Muff.
HOGARTH, W.	Lord Lovat. The Laughing Audience.
WORLIDGE, T.	Portrait of Walter Baker. First state.
BAILLIE, Captain W.	Portrait of Franz Hals. After himself.
GIRTIN, T.	View of Belle Vue and Pont de Sève from the Terrace at St. Cloud. View of the City with the Louvre. Finished print in aquatint of the above.
TURNER, J. M. W.	Preliminary etching for the "Via Mala." Junction of the Severn and the Wye. Etched state and the finished mezzotint. Preliminary etching for the mezzotint " Little Devil's Bridge."
ROWLANDSON, T.	Ducking a Scold.
WILKIE, Sir D.	Reading the Will. The Lost Receipt.
GEDDES, A.	Mrs. Geddes, the Artist's mother. First state. View at Peckham Rye. Second state.
CROME, J.	Mousehold Heath. Landscape etching from " Norfolk Pic- turesque Scenery," 1834.
COTMAN, J. S.	Caernarvon Castle, North Wales. Harlech Castle. Postwick Grove, Norfolk. The North-West Tower, Yarmouth.

DANIELL, Rev. E. T.	Borough Bridge.
STANNARD, J.	Witlingham Old Church.
	Fisherman's Cottage.
READ, D. C.	Two landscape etchings.
KEENE, C. S.	Lock on Canal between Watford and King's Langley.
	Boats on Shore.
PALMER, S.	The Herdsman.
	The Early Ploughman.
WHISTLER, J. A. McN.	The Lime-burners.
	Black Lion Wharf.
	Becquet.
	Annie Haden.
	The Wine Glass.
	York Street, Westminster.
	Balcony, Amsterdam.
	The Traghetto.
HADEN, Sir F. Seymour	Shepperton.
	Out of Study Window.
	Kilgaren Castle.
	Sunset on the Thames.
	Shere Mill Pond.
	Breaking-up of the <i>Agamemnon</i> .
	Sunset in Ireland.
LEGROS, A.	Le Mouton Retrouvé.
	The Storm.
	La Mort du Vagabond.
	Le Mur du Presbytère.
HOLROYD, Sir C.	Nymphs by the Sea.
	Yew Tree, Glaramara.
STRANG, W.	Roof of the Halles, Ypres.
	The Ruined Castle.
	Portrait of Frederick Goulding.
EAST, Sir A.	The Hill-top.
HERKOMER, Sir H. von	Gwenddyd.
ARMSTRONG, Elizabeth	Good Morning.
(Mrs. Stanhope Forbes).	

CAMERON, D. Y.	Kincardine. The Chimera of Amiens.
BRANGWYN, F.	A Road in Picardy. Breaking-up of the <i>Hannibal</i> .
BONE, Muirhead	Demolition of St. James's Hall. Interior. Walberswick Ferry. Ayr Prison.
JOHN, A.	Girl's Head.
McBEY, J.	El Soko, Tetuan. Dawn. Camel Patrol setting out.
SHORT, Sir F.	Low Tide, the Evening Star, and Rye's Long Pier Deserted. Entrance to the Medway. A Wintry Blast on the Stourbridge Canal.



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